

# CSU daycare project closer to becoming a reality <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

The Concordia Student Union announced that its long-awaited daycare will be located downtown on Bishop St., right next to McKibbins.

“I’m super enthusiastic about it,” said university President Alan Shepard of the project, which his administration worked with the CSU. “One of the things that was important to me was to have more daycares on campus.”

The idea for the project was first spawned in 2011 after the release of a study titled, “Student Parents And Their Children: How can we help them?” The study was conducted by the Concordia University Student Parents Centre and the Dean of Students Office.

The research expressed that 81 per cent of undergraduate student parents felt that family obligations were either major or minor obstacles to academic achievement. A CSU referendum in the 2014 by-elections also indicated that 87 per cent of undergraduate students supported the initiative.

“Since [the 2011 study], CSU’s been thinking about it, but the concrete steps came into place last year,” said Marion Miller, VP of Academic and Advocacy at the CSU and the head coordinator of the project.

Preliminary research began in summer 2014 in order to evaluate the feasibility of the project.

The CSU hired a consultant to begin the application process for the Centres de la petite enfance, or CPE, which would have secured public funding from the Quebec government’s Ministry of Families.

However, when the Liberal majority put a halt to the expansion of the CPE initiative, the CSU was unable to secure a permit to receive the public funding. As a result, the project must be funded privately.

Expenses for the first year are projected to be \$605,766, with estimated revenues at \$441,438—that would leave a \$164,328 budgetary deficit.

The CSU passed a motion to put forward a referendum question that would address the deficit. Students will be asked if they agree to a fee-levy reallocation of \$0.24 from the Student Space, Accessible Education and Legal Contingency Fund to a Daycare and Nursery-specific fund.

According to Miller, if the referendum passes, the CSU will have enough money to balance the budget and have a small surplus.

The Liberal government has implemented a tax credit system which allows anyone paying for daycare services to be reimbursed at the end of each month. The rate for the CSU daycare is estimated to be \$37 per day, but the tax credit system will reimburse student-parents a portion of

the cost depending on their personal circumstance, with yearly income as one of the major deciding factors.

The CSU is hoping to delay charging the parents for the first month until they receive reimbursement from the government.

Although they’re not officially part of the CPE, the student union is aiming at maintaining the status quo standard for Quebec daycares.

“We’re already going to be meeting the same regulations as the CPE, because we think it’s important to use the best quality situation,” Miller said.

“And so, at that point, if in five years a new government decides to reinstate CPEs, we’ll already be at that level.”

There will be space for 52 children. Some spots will be filled full-time, and others will be on rotation. Miller estimates that the daycare will be able to serve 65 to 70 families.

The university bought the space around 2011, according to Miller. They will be renting the building to the CSU on a 10-year lease.

Construction of the space will begin in March 2016, with the projected cost estimated at around \$365,000.

-reprinted from The Link

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